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A BRIEF HISTORY OF
BOONE COUNTY
KENTUCKY

BY

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CHAPTER I

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SETTLEMENT OF KENTUCKY

Kentucky, once a part of Virginia, formed a vast hunting ground for the Indian tribes of the north and south. The Creeks, Cherokees, and Catawbas of the south encountered the Shawnees, Delawares and Wyandottes of the north on the "Dark and Bloody" land. These hostile tribes kept the pioneer from making any permanent settlements for some time.

Hunters from the colonies east of the mountains wandered over the mountains in search of game which was plentiful. They brought back tales of this fruitful land to the other settlers. Land companies were organized and surveyors were sent to stake out claims. Thomas Walker and Christopher Gist were representatives of Loyal Land Company and Ohio Land Company, respectively. Their expeditons for land were a failure but they paved the way for future exploration.

Daniel Boone, inspired by John Finley, who made the trip in 1767, traversed the northern and middle regions of the state in 1769 with much attention. He stayed two years, during the time James Knox and his Long Hunters were in the area. They never met, though they were in the country together.

After Boone and Knox returned, bounty was given to Virginia troops for service in the French War. Thomas Bullitt led a party of surveyors to the falls of Ohio in 1773, but no permanent settlement was made. Other parties of surveyors and hunters followed in 1774, when James Harrod erected a cabin on the spot where Harrodsburg stands. It has the distinction of being the oldest settlement in Kentucky. Closely following in 1775, Boone laid the foundation of Boonesborough.

From this time on Harrodsburg and Boonesborough became the nucleus for settlement of Kentucky.[1] Pioneers came over the mountains and followed the waterways to their home sites, but stayed close to the forts for protection from the Indians. Life was hard and sacrifices were heavy. Indians were determined to drive white men from their hunting ground and the settlers were just as determined to make this land their home. Thus a constant fear of the Indians existed. The settlers came with their family cow, a few chickens and hogs and a home was started.

One might ask why the settlers left their homes in Virginia, South Carolina and Pennsylvania to brave the hardships of the wilderness in order to make Kentucky their home. The foremost reason was search for land. Settlers followed the rivers and creeks to places of settlement, planted their crops of corn and tobacco, grazed their cattle and other stock.

Rivers had a great deal to do with the settlement of Kentucky. An important internal river is the Kentucky River. It flows across Kentucky from three diverse sources, emptying into the Ohio River at Carrollton.[2] Other internal rivers of importance are the Licking, Barren, Green, Cumberland and Tennessee.

Important both in industry and settlement of Kentucky is the Ohio River, which forms the Northern boundary of the state from Boyd County to the Mississippi River at Ballard County. The present form of the Ohio River was achieved 40,000 to 50,000 years ago due to the drainage of glaciers into old divides.

The Iroquois appropriately named the river "Ohio" or "The Beautiful."[3] Beginning at Pittsburg, the river formed a means of transportation for French fur traders and Priests bringing faith to the Indians.

Boone County is bounded on the north by the Ohio River which accounts for much of its settlement. This and the Big Bone Springs were the two main attractions for settlement.

As early as 1729, a Frenchman by the name of de Longueil was sent down from French Canada to rid the French settlers of trouble from the Indians. On his way down the Ohio he came to a little stream now known as Big Bone Creek. On ascending the stream he discovered Big Bone Lick.[4] Because of the salty waters found at the lick, mammals would gather at the lick, feast, love and die. Thus, the name "Graveyard of the Mammals" is given to the lick.

We find record of Robert Smith visting the lick frequently and removing many huge bones in 1744-1751. Before 1780, Christopher Gist, John Finley, Mary Inglis, the first white woman in Kentucky, and George Croghan visited the lick. No settlement was made until after 1774 when a survey was completed by John Floyd and Wm.Preston. A land grant was given by Thomas Jefferson, Governor of Virginia in 1780, to an American soldier who fought in the American Revolution. This grant included Big Bone Springs.

In 1785 a company from Pennsylvania came down the Ohio and cleared 30 to 40 acres on land of John Tanner, the first Baptist minister in this part of the state, on site where Petersburg now is.[6] From these two nuclei the area which is now Boone County was settled.

II. FORMATION OF COUNTIES

Before 1776 Kentucky territory was part of Fincastle County, Virginia.

On December 6, 1776, Fincastle County was divided into three counties, one of which was called Kentucky county. This act entitled Kentucky to a separate county court, two justices of peace, a sheriff, constables, coroner and militia officers. Laws existed in Kentucky for the first time.

On November 1, 1780, Kentucky county was subdivided into three counties: Jefferson, with Colonel John Floyd, Lieutenant Colonel William Pope, George May, Surveyor. Lincoln with Benjamin Logan Stephen Trigg, and James Thompson officers. Fayette with Colonel John Todd, Lt. Colonel Daniel Boone, and Thomas Marshall, Surveyor.[8]

As the population increased, the counties subdivided again and again. By 1792, when Kentucky was admitted to the Union, there were 9 counties: Mason, Woodford, Mercer, Jefferson, Nelson, Bourbon, Madison, Lincoln, and Fayette.

Division took place before the state was admitted to the union The year 1785 showed Bourbon being organized out of Fayette. Mason was formed from Bourbon and Woodford out of Fayette in 1788. During 1792, Scott was formed out of Woodford and in the next year, Harrison out of Woodford and Scott. Campbell County was organized in 1794 out of Harrison, Scott, and Mason. Boone, the thirtieth in order of formation, was formed in 1798 from Campbell county.

III. EARLY HISTORY OF BOONE COUNTY

Shortly before 1790, John Tanner, the first Baptist preacher in this part of the state, settled on the spot now known as Petersburg. A company from Pennsylvania cleared land of Mr. Tanner and made the first settlement in Boone County. The settlement was named Tanner's Station in honor of Mr. Tanner. A block house and stock yard were constructed and a town was begun.

Danger from the Indians was realized when a son of Mr. Tanner nine years old, was captured by them while he was playing and remained with the Indians for twenty years, after which he was employed by the U. S. Government as an interpreter. Another son was captured in 1791, but escaped and returned home safely.

Petersburg is the site of an aborginal burying ground and remains of a fortification were found by the early settlers. The occupants of the Petersburg area before the coming of white man are known as the Fort Ancient people.

Petersburg, plotted in 1818, was laid out for the capital of Kentucky. Capital Square was plotted before Symmes founded Cincinnati.[15] Petersburg was settled because of the rich alluvial bottom lands on the Ohio River.[16]

Besides the buried ancient city, Petersburg is the site of Split Rock then called "Nobly." It is the most interesting natural scene on the Ohio River. Split probably Rock was created by the earthquake of 1811.[17]

The first child born in Boone County was Polly Ann Ryle. She was born at Tanner's Station in December, 1790.

By the early 1800's, Petersburg was a flourishing town with a bank in 1818, flour mill, school, distillery, church, and a cemetery.[18]

Other towns in Boone County owe their existence to the many miles of territory bounding the Ohio River. Hamilton Landing, now called Hamilton, was one of the earliest settlements. Hamilton, owes settlement to two factors. First is the rich bottom lands and second is its closeness to Big Bone Lick.[19] It was one of the stopping places for boats going down the river.

Belleview, a town up the river from Hamilton, in the East Bend Bottom, called Piatt's Landing, was settled early in the 19th century along with Rabbit Hash.

The North Bend Bottom was another early settlement in Boone County. The Bullittsville community was settled sometime before 1794 which marked the begining of the Bullittsburg Baptist Church, now one of the oldest existing church edifices west of the Alleghanies. The community was known as Bullock Bottoms and the church, Bullock Bottoms Baptist Church. In 1797, this church united with the Sand Run Baptist Church and changed its name to Bullittsburg Baptist Church.[20]

Constance, opposite the suburbs of Cincinnati, was settled primarily by people of German origin. Today the names Kottmeyer, Hempfling and Dolwick, show the German ancestry. A ferry, operated before 1800 still operates at Constance. The orignal owners, Wilson and Delahive operated the ferry before a Mr. Anderson, who sold the ferry to the family of the present owners in 1864. Charles Kottmeyer bought the ferry in 1864 and his grandsons, Henry, Jr., and Oliver Kottmeyer, now operate a much modernized ferry.[21]

Hebron, three miles from the river in the northern part of the county was also settled by people of German ancestry.

Mitchellsville, a forgotten town now, was one of the early settlements.

One of the first turnpikes in the county was one from Mitchellsville to Dry Creek, on Kenton County border, made of sawed timbers 8 inches wide and 2 inches thick. [22]

Let us not forget the Big Bone Springs, two miles from the river on Big Bone Creek. Big Bone was discovered in 1729 by Captain Charles Lemoyne de Longueil believed to be the first European to set foot on Kentucky. Collins gives the following account of the Lick: "It is situated in a valley which contains about 100 acres through which flows Big Bone Creek. There are two principal springs, one of which is almost on the northern margin of the creek, the other is south of the creek and in the base of the hills which bound the valley. There is a third spring of smaller size considerable distance north of the creek which flows from a well sunk many years ago when salt was manufactured at the lick. The valley is fertile and surrounded by irregular hills of unequal elevation, the highest being on the west and attaining an altitude of 5000 feet. The back water from the Ohio River ascends the creek at times more than three miles from its mouth. At a very early date the surrounding forest had no undergrowth, the ground being covered with a smooth grassy turf and the salt lick spread over an area of 10 acres. The surface of ground within this area was generally depressed three or four feet below the level of surrounding valley. This depression was probably occasioned by the stamping of wild animals drawn thither by the salt contained in water and the ground, and by their licking the earth to secure the salt."

The lick was visited by such prehistoric animals as mastodons, an elephant of huge size, buffalos, and arctic elephant[23] which followed Woolper Creek, crossing the Ohio at the creek's mouth between Belleview and Petersburg, to the lick.[24] Until recent years the trail was visible on the Y.M.C.A. camp ground near Burlington. The early visitors told of finding huge teeth, weighing 10 pounds and the surface for chewing 5 to 7 inches in diameter. Tusks found were 11 feet in length and 6 to 7 inches in diameter. Thigh bones were described as being 4 to 5 feet in length.

Because of the numerous remains found there the lick was named 'Grave Yard of the Mammoth." Several collections of bones have been carried away.

Many of the remaining bones are in a museum in London.

Salt was manufactured here before 1812 by both Indians and whites.

The lick was a popular place for people to come and spend a vacation for therapeutic purposes.[25] A hotel built in early nineteenth century

was named the "Clay," and included a row of bath houses. Another hotel was built in 1870 but didn't prove as popular as the first. No sign of the hotel is to be found today.[26] At present, plans are underway to make this historic site a state park.

As the years progressed, settlement was made into the county. In 1798, the year Boone County was organized, John Craig and Robert Johnson donated 74 acres for a county seat. It was named Wilmington in 1800 and received the name of Burlington in 1806. The first court house was built in 1817, which had a brick floor and brick columns in front. This building was remodeled in 1878, with the present building being constructed in 1889.

One of three hangings in Boone County took place on Hangman's Tree on the Burlington Pike. A negro was the victim. The orginal jail was a log structure. One prisoner escaped by setting fire to the jail. A two story building replaced the log jail. The present building replaced this two story jail.[27]

Farther into the county is the Hopeful community settled in 1806 to 1820. One of the county's earliest churches was started in 1805, the Hopeful Lutheran Church. The community is now an important suburb of Florence, settled at the crossroads of Burlington Pike and the Covington to Lexington Pike, in 1820.

Florence was first called Pole Cat because the Indians brought their furs here for exchange. It was then called Crossroads because of the crossing of Burlington and Ridge Road. The town was re-named Maddenstown, later named Connersville, and in 1830 when a postoffice was established, was re-named Florence. Florence had its boom during the stage coach days when the town was the first stop out of Covington. The building of the Covington to Lexington turnpike helped the town in 1836.

Walton, on the Dixie Highway, 10 miles south of Florence, was formed on January 21, 1840.[28] Walton had a postoffice as early as 1815 under the name of Gains Ford Road. The town was named Gains Crossroad in 1823 and Walton in 1841. Walton, as well as Florence was on the stage coach route.

Limaburg lies in a valley between a winding hill and a narrow bridge on the way from Florence to Burlington. A town consisting of a saw mill and a general store was once a busy little place. A grist mill was operated in 1849 by Jeremiah Beemon, using the waters of Gunpowder Creek to turn the mill. A saw mill was added about the time of the Civil War. A

school house on a hill overlooking the town served as a school, church, and meeting place. A post office was put in the town in 1885 after changing the name Needmore to Limaburg. This office operated until 1907 when R.F.D. service was instituted. Now a general store is all that is left to remind you of the days gone by.[29]

Verona, five miles west of Walton, was settled in mid-century. A postoffice was established there in 1850.

Union, southwest of Florence on U.S. 42, was incorporated in 1871.[30]

The mid-century mark of 1850 showed the following towns with post offices: Petersburg, Hamilton, Burlington, Elijah Creek, Middle Creek, Mitchellsville, Mills, Florence, Walton, Union, and Verona. By 1874 Bullittsville, Constance, Grant, and Hebron were added to the list.[31]

Today, several of these towns are out of existence or receive their mail by R. F. D.

In the early 1800's we find the means of transportation over mud roads or streams, reading material was scarce, and much of the work was done by slaves.

River traffic was topic for conversation. The first sea vessel to pass Petersburg was in 1801. It was called Bryant St. Clair, of 100 ton burthen. In "Western Spy", 1813-1814, is a comment concerning traffic on the river: "Expectation has been on tip-toe on account of a report that a steamboat passed down the river on the way from Pittsburg to New Orleans." Another states: "The keelboat Christopher Columbus passed down from New Orleans to Pittsburg last week heavily loaded with sugar and molasses, 57 days out." And concerning flat boats: "Col. Sebree and John Harsley who took a flatboat of pork to New Orleans have returned. They gave thrilling accounts of their return trip afoot through Indian country."

By 1830, steamboats were on the Ohio. Steamboat racing was a hazard to life and property. It seems that a rich widow was taking her goods to New Orleans and made the captain promise not to race. A boat challenged the widow's boat and because the challenger was a "Damn Yankee," the widow released her promise by throwing her pork into the boiler; they were victors.[32]

Showboats came in 1858 to Peterburg. On January 28, 1859, the steamers Nat Holmes and David Gibson collided and sunk at Peterburg.

The river furnished means by which Boone Countians could get goods from foreign markets. 1813-1814 "Western Spy" gave an account of Col. John Flournoy receiving a clock from Philadelphia, the first of its

kind in Boone County. People from near and far went to see the wonderful machine.

By 1800, two ferrys were in operation. Permit was granted in 1800 to John Piatt to operate a ferry to Lawrenceburg, Indiana, and another to George Anderson to operate a ferry at Constance. The Anderson Ferry was bought in 1864 by Charles Kottmeyer and is run today by his grand. sons. It is now operated by diesel power in comparison to the original horsepower.[33]

In 1851, the Florence-Burlington turnpike was started to replace the mud road.[34]

We have an example of the mud roads in the country by Dr. Frank Sayer, who moved to Hebron in 1893 to practice medicine. He rode horseback all over the county on mud roads, leaving in the morning and returning late at night. Even in 1900, Boone County had only 83 miles of macadamized roads and 1,120 miles of mud roads.[35]

Kenton, Campbell, Grant, and Owen Counties had free roads in comparison to Boone's toll gate system but they were generally impassable. [36] The last toll gate in Boone was removed in 1915 on Burlington Pike.

Cincinnati was the source of reading material. In 1793, the first newspaper was published northwest of Ohio River; "Centinel of North Western Territory." Before 1795 "The Freeman's Journal," and "Cincinnati Sentinel" were published weekly or monthly according to the amount of paper they had. At the close of 1795 they quit and "Western Spy" and "Hamilton Gazette" were issued in their place. These two papers were issued weekly until 1814, when "Western Spy" assumed the name of "Cincinnati Republican." Other papers, 1814-1840 were issued taking sides of politics.[37]

There was always a keen appetite for news. In late 1870's, the favored few read "Enquirer" after the steamer "Water Witch," brought it down on its first trip from Lawrenceburg.

Boone County had its own paper, "Boone County Journal," publsh-ed in 1875, by Ben Deering. It was the beginning of the "Boone County Recorder." "Walton Advertiser" was published in 1916.[38]

John Uri Lloyd, famous chemist and author, wrote books in the late 19th century with Boone County as a background.

Boone, like other counties in the state, had its share of slaves. Patrols were organized in the county to guard the river banks to prevent slaves slipping across the river to freedom. Once a group of slaves was

operating a trade of stolen goods with traders in Indiana across the river. The slaves stole goods from their masters and sold the goods to dealers in Indiana. A patrol caught the slaves in the act and by severly whipping them they made them talk and expose the ring.[39]These patrols were paid by the order of county courts and received one dollar for every ten hours of duty. The captains of these patrols had the power to punish captured slaves by any number of lashes not exceeding ten, and more, by the order of the Justice of the Peace.

The price of slaves varied according to laws based by U. S. Government and State Government. In 1839, a record of a slave woman at Gunpowder roads: "We have this day sold to Jacob Crigler a negro woman named Tinie who we warrant to be sound in body and mind and title goes to you under our hands this 30th day of December, 1839, (signed) Joseph Kendrich, Jacob Clarkson." The price is supposed to have been $800. In 1855, seven slaves were sold to settle an estate for $1,015 to $1,505 each.

In 1885 Boone had 1,745 slaves and 48 free colored.[40] In 1860 Petersburg had 26 slaves.[41] On September 27,1853,slaves from Boone County joined with those of neighboring counties in a stampede across the Ohio River in an effort to gain their freedom.

Boone County, being a religious county, has had its quota of churches from its beginning. Baptist, Christian, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian Methodist Episcopal, and Catholic are all represented.

The Baptists were the first to be organized in the county. Bullittsburg Baptist Church had its beginning in 1794. Sand Run Baptist Church, once a part of Bullittsburg Church, was organized in 1819. Next in order of formation came Oak Wood Church in 1825, and Burlington Baptist in 1842. Soon afterwards came the Big Bone Baptist in 1843. Florence Baptist Church had its beginning in 1855 with Walton following in 1866. Not until 1886 was the Union Church formed. Petersburg, even though the town was founded by a Baptist Minister, did not have an organized Baptist church until 1914. Verona started a church at a early date.

The Lutheran Church had an early beginning. The first Lutheran Church to be started was at Hopeful in 1805 with a resident pastor in 1813.[42] This was the only Lutheran Church in the county until 1854, when Hebron Lutheran was organized at the home of John J. Crigler with 16 members. The year 1856 showed 11 members separating from

Hopeful and organizing Ebenezer Church on Mount Zion Road, off of U. S. 25.[43] At the present time, only the Hebron and Hopeful Churches exist.

The Methodists were next to start a church in Boone County in 1820, when Petersburg started a church of that denomination. A building was not built until 1850. Florence Methodist was organized in 1842. Big Bone Methodist was next to be formed in 1837. Walton also has a Methodist Church.

The Christian Church had an early beginning in Boone County. Petersburg Christian Church was organized in 1824, with a building constructed in 1840. Point Pleasant Church was started in 1839, but only the building stands today.

Richwood Presbyterian Church was begun in 1834. That was the only church of that denomination until 1870 when a church was begun at Union.

The Catholics had their start in 1851, when Corneilus Ahern started the St. Pauls Church in Florence. St. Patricks Church, in Verona was begun in 1865.

A Methodist Episcopal Church was started in Beaver Lick in 1878.[44] These churches today have made strides toward the modern era and are all modernizing to take care of the present day needs.

1818 showed two banks in Boone County being chartered. The Burlington and Petersburg banks were begun then. 1903 showed banks in Verona, Union, and Petersburg. The Florence bank was formed in 1904. Grant Bank was started in 1909, Hebron in 1920, and Walton in 1927.[47]

Schools in Boone County had their beginning in 1814 by an act authorizing the creation of an academy, later to be known as Morgan Academy, situated in Burlington.[46]A school was started in Petersburg in 1816.[47] Soon thereafter each community started a school for its children. Private schools flourished around the middle of the 19th Century with grammar schools and writing schools predominating.

Nelson Lloyd came to Florence in 1856. He taught until 1865 in the old Town Hall, built in 1851. Many other private schools were established after Lloyd left Florence.

The first public school in Florence was in 1887, with no one graduating until 1915. The first graded high school in Florence was in 1908.[48]

Before consolidation the county had a school in each district. The first consolidated high school was at Burlington in 1907.[49] Hebron con-

solidated in 1925, and Florence in 1929.[50]

The first fair in the county was held sometime before 1845.The fair grounds were located in what is now Kent-a-boo, outside of Florence. The fair lasted one week, with the first day always the ladies day, with their prize quilts, cakes and candies. This fair closed in 1880.[51]

1895 showed the beginning of the Northern Kentucky Agricultural Association Fair. This fair was located in Florence at the corner of Union and Lexington Roads. The first annual fair was held in 1896 and continued until 1932[52]. The fair ground is the site of a subdivision today.

Before the twentieth century the Harvest Home Fair was held.

The Boone County 4-H and Utopia Fair was organized in 1933.

First fairs were held on Florence Fair Grounds and then moved to Harvest Home grounds on Limaburg-Hebron road, then to the present site on the Burlington-Idlewile Road. It is a three day affair with a horse show and other interesting attractions. High premiums are paid.[53]

Thus, Boone County, from its beginning to 1798, consisted of isolated towns, depending on its own industries to keep them in existence and the majority of the roads being mud with a few macadamized. Farming was the main source of income. In 1883 there were several hotels in operation, dealers in dry goods, doctors and surgeons, blacksmiths, carriage makers, breeders of live stock and poultry, six attorneys at law, shoemakers, teachers, tombstone dealers, and harness makers along with the farming industry.[54]

Boone County had its ups and downs in population. In 1810, it had only 1,534 inhabitants. By 1810, the population had more than doubled with 3,608. It about doubled again by 1820, with 6,542. A big gain was made by 1830, with 9,075 people. The population began to slow up in 1840 with only10,034 total. 1850 showed only 11,185 with only 11 more in 1860 with 11,196. The population took a backslide in 1870 with 10,696. 1890 showed a gain again with 11,995, gaining 5 in 10 years with 12,000 in 1900. Today's population of about 14,000 shows hat the population hasn't grown very fast in the past 50 years.

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF BOONE COUNTY

As the 20th century rolled in it brought with it many changes in Boone County. Roads were being constructed which made possible more consolidation in the school system; cars were owned in the county which ended the "horse and buggy days" as well as the carriage making industry; the towns near the river suffered by the shift of traffic to highways while the towns near these main traffic routes grew in population and

business. Because of the improvement of roads, residents of Boone County sought employment elsewhere, and farming was not the only income of the families.

Petersburg. once a busy town on the river, has become an old town with no new buildings, no new industries and the same family lines. Boats quit stopping at Petersburg around 1900.

Petersburg claims E. Y. Chapin as one of its prominent citizens. After getting his education, he left Petersburg and went to Chattanooga where he has had a great influence on the growth of the Tennessee city. Because of his interest in literature, he has established a permanent library in the Christian Church in Petersburg. [55]

Compressed yeast was first made in Petersburg at the once prosperous distillery.

Indiana plans to build a bridge from Aurora to Petersburg which should encourage development in Petersburg.

The same trend has affected the other river towns. Hamilton and Belleview have both declined in population due both to decreased river traffic and the decline of Big Bone Springs. Belleview has grown in the past 20 years due to the building of Dam 38, Constance has grown due to it closeness to Covington, but is not the busy river town it once was. The modern ferry is a focal point for traffic through the town.

Our County seat has begun to flourish again due to improved roads.

Hebron's growth has extended in all directions.

The town which has grown most is Florence near the Kenton County line. Florence, only ten miles south of Covington and Cincinnati, is a spot sought by hundreds as a quiet residential home site, close to the city, but far enough out to avoid the hustle and bustle of town life. In reference to the census of 1950, Boone County gained in population 29% in the 10 year period of 1940-1950. In the same period, Florence increased 69%. Its population was 900 in 1900 and is 2100 at the present day.[56] The 1950 population was 1320, so in the past four years it has grown by leaps and bounds.

Walton, an industrious town ten miles south of Florence has gained in population.

A new county high school building, in Florence, with rare beauty and facilities, will be completed on a seventeen acre tract by next fall. This advancement from one room school house to this efficient program has brought about greater interest in higher education, improving educational level of the people.

Thus, the early Boone County of river towns and boat traffic which ended around 1900, has progressed to the present day county of over 13,000 population from the 1800 population of 1,534. The major industry is still farming, but more and more the people are earning their keep elsewhere and making Boone County their home. One only has to take a leisurely Sunday afternoon drive around our scenic countryside to see why it is a "Much Loved Land."

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